

# CIRCUIT COURT CLERK

## DESCRIPTION

The Circuit Court Clerk is an elected official responsible for administration of the Chesterfield Circuit Court through a variety of judicial, non-judicial, and fiscal activities. The Clerk's Office provides administrative support to the judiciary by preparing, recording, and maintaining court orders, subpoenas, and pleadings. The Office provides case-related information and court documents to state, local, and federal agencies as well as to the general public, attorneys, litigants, and the media. As caseloads increase, so do demands placed upon Clerk's Office staff to record court proceedings and process and maintain the records and evidence associated with all cases filed.

On the non-judicial side, the Circuit Court Clerk serves as the probate judge in admitting or denying wills to probate and in qualifying executors,

administrators, and/or guardians. The Clerk is also the County Register of Deeds and, as such, is responsible for recording all deeds, deeds of trust, powers of attorney, and real estate liens and releases. Other transactions and recordings processed by the Clerk's Office include judgments, financing statements, partnerships, fictitious names, marriage licenses, concealed handgun permits, passports, and a variety of appointments including ministers, notaries, local Commission and Board members, and law enforcement officers.

Fiscal responsibilities include the maintenance and investment of trust and condemnation funds as well as collection of court fines and costs, real estate transfer fees, recordation taxes, and other fees authorized by statute.

## FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002 Biennial	FY2002	Change FY2001 to FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005
	Actual	Adopted	Planned	Adopted		Projected	Projected	Projected
<b>Personnel</b>	\$1,382,074	\$1,446,900	\$1,490,400	\$1,649,000	14.0%	\$1,698,600	\$1,749,600	\$1,802,000
<b>Operating</b>	486,899	572,700	590,000	586,700	2.4%	586,700	586,700	586,700
<b>Capital</b>	9,095	0	0	5,900	N/A	5,900	5,900	5,900
<b>Total</b>	\$1,878,068	\$2,019,600	\$2,080,400	\$2,241,600	11.0%	\$2,291,200	\$2,342,200	\$2,394,600
<b>Revenue</b>	<u>1,478,507</u>	<u>1,569,000</u>	<u>1,616,100</u>	<u>1,541,800</u>	-1.7%	<u>1,592,400</u>	<u>1,633,400</u>	<u>1,697,900</u>
<b>Net Cost</b>	\$399,561	\$450,600	\$464,300	\$699,800	55.3%	\$698,800	\$708,800	\$696,700
<b>FT Pos.</b>	36	39	39	39	0	39	39	39

Note: The FY2001 Adopted number of FT positions reflects a correction from last year's document.

## BUDGET ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Customer service demands continued to increase during FY2001 and show no sign of dissipating. Once again, level State funding is anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year. With the State's failure to provide sufficient funding to meet staffing standards based on workload, additional pressure is placed on the County to provide additional resources.

The most important issue currently facing the Office is the immediate need for workspace since current space for additional staff has reached maximum capacity. A 15,000 square foot expansion to the office has been requested through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Funding is planned in the current six-year CIP for the design and construction of the project. An interim solution is planned to create workspace for six positions.

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Should funding be secured for additional personnel beyond the six pursuant to staffing standards promulgated by the State Compensation Board, office space will be unavailable to accommodate them. Due to state funding constraints, it is unlikely that the Compensation Board will approve more than six positions and the short-term solution will be adequate. Consequently, the funding request for such positions has been included as a “future year issue” instead of an additional funding request for FY2002. It is important to note that unlike other offices, Clerk’s Office personnel cannot be relocated to “satellite” facilities due to statutory limitations and the adverse impact on workflow.

The only additional funding request made this year is a request for permanent funding for one existing position in the office’s civil division. Currently, this position is funded one half by the County and one half by the Compensation Board. The permanence of this position is critical to ensure that the Office can meet case processing and customer service demands. Again this year, a request was made to the Compensation Board for FY2002 to create a

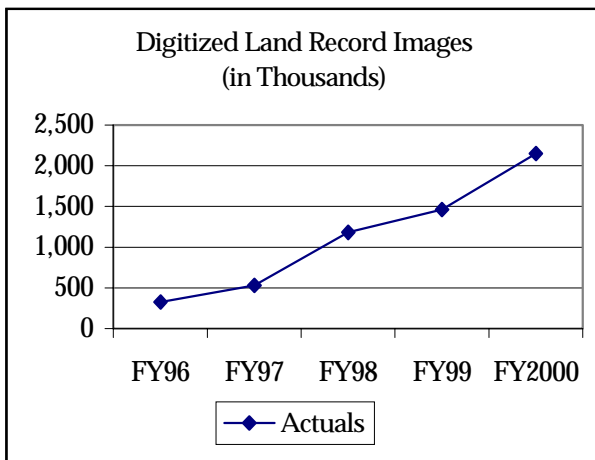
permanent position. Although a funding commitment is not deemed likely, if granted, the budgetary impact to the County would significantly decrease.

The budgeted revenue figure for FY2002 has been decreased to reflect state revenue, assumed in FY2001 for the funding of two additional clerk positions, that was not received.

The Circuit Court Clerk’s Office continues to make progress toward its goal of automating important processes. In FY2001, an automated evidence tracking system was developed and a new debit system installed in the Public Record Room to accommodate new currency in circulation and reduce downtime due to maintenance issues. Additional funding has been granted in FY2002 for acquisition of an additional image retrieval unit. Funding has also been included in FY2002 for salary adjustments, to bring the salaries in the Clerk’s Office closer to those of other Clerks’ offices.

## **HOW ARE WE DOING?**

<b>Goal:</b>	To provide the public with an effective means of recording and accessing information related to the County’s land and other vital records. Supports Countywide Strategic Goal Numbers 1, 6, and 7.
<b>Objective:</b>	Create/maintain digital images of all land records processed
<b>Measure:</b>	Number of digitized land record images



### **Initiatives**

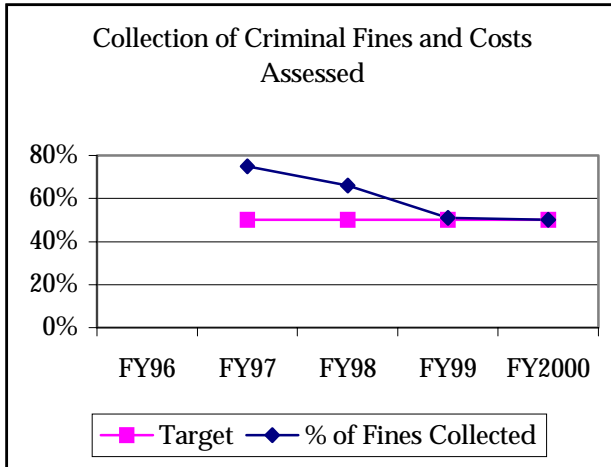
- Daily scanning of land records
- Back-file conversion of microfilm to a new digital format
- Verification of conversion accuracy

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**Goal:** To provide quality customer service and administrative support to judiciary and others transacting court-related business. Supports Countywide Strategic Goal Numbers 1 and 6.

**Objective:** Collect at least 50% of criminal fines and costs assessed

**Measure:** Percent of criminal fines and costs collected versus assessed



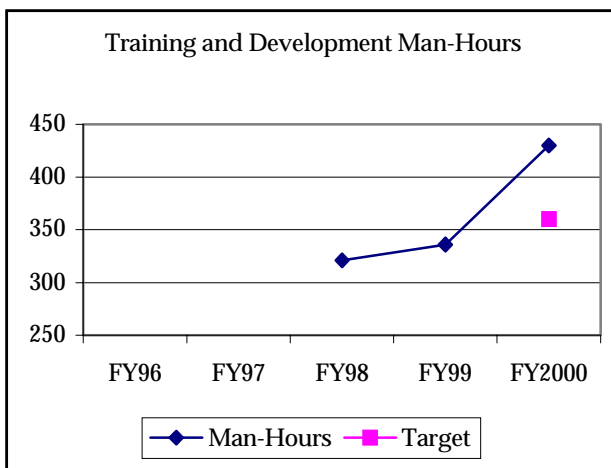
## Initiatives

- Payment plan administration
- Department of Taxation acting as Court's collection agent
- Operator's license suspensions for non-payment

**Goal:** To attract, maintain, and develop a well-qualified workforce. Supports Countywide Strategic Goal Numbers 1, 5 and 6.

**Objective:** Provide Clerk's Office employees multiple opportunities for training and professional development

**Measure:** Number of man-hours dedicated to training and professional development



## Initiatives

- Computer training and County training opportunities made available to all staff
- Regular attendance at regional meetings and user group meetings sponsored by Supreme Court of Virginia
- Regular attendance at educational conferences aimed at Clerks and Deputy Clerks
- On-line computer training made possible by the Supreme Court of Virginia

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## **WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

Several technology-related items have been identified as priorities for funding in the out year projections. The Clerk's Office hopes to expand its efforts in digitizing land records through more extensive back-file conversion of these records on microfilm to a digitized format compatible with remote access. The Department also hopes to utilize an imaging system to house criminal and civil case information and the Intranet/Internet transaction capability. However, funding has not been included in FY2003, FY2004, or FY2005 for these items.

In future years, the Office will continue to seek methods by which to provide efficient storage and retrieval of all land, court, and legal documents through automated systems. During the upcoming year, the office will begin to provide remote access to land and other permanent court records. Remote access to digital images and indexing databases will be made available via a subscription service. This program will improve customer service while minimizing strains placed on existing personnel that assist customers performing research in the Public

Record Room. Additional back-file conversion will make the database available to potential customers more marketable.

An electronic imaging system for court documents would significantly improve workflow, would allow for faster retrieval of documents, and would help to preserve original documents. Improved access to court records would benefit both customers and staff alike.

Additional funding for consulting and/or Information Systems services is needed to allow the office to take advantage of Internet/Intranet opportunities for e-commerce. As the Internet becomes more mainstream, this funding becomes more critical. The Clerk's Office looks forward to implementing additional technological advancements, as funding becomes available.

Future year projections include minimal increases in personnel costs due to anticipated increases in benefit costs.